receptacle. A small basket (*ka shong*) is hung up over the head of the corpse, the basket containing pieces (*dyshot*) of the sacrificial animals. A dish containing eatables, and betel-nut, and a jar of water are placed near the head of the corpse by way of offering refreshment to the spirit of the departed. The food is given each morning and evening that the corpse remains in the house; this is called *ai ja saiat ja slap*. Each night the corpse remains in the house guns are fired, drums are beaten and flutes (*shideit*) are played. It is a noteworthy custom that the body is not retained in the house for an even number of nights, the usual time being three nights. If it is intended to burn the body on a funerary pyre (*jingkheng*), a bull (*u suai kpoh*) is sacrificed. If the body is placed in a coffin (*ka shyngaid*), a pig named *u'siang shyngaid* is sacrificed, and if it is intended to adorn the pyre with flags, a fowl called *u'kor lait* is sacrificed. On the day of the funeral procession pigs are sacrificed by the relatives and friends of the deceased; those who cannot afford pigs bring liquor (*ka'iad shog*), a small portion of which they pour on the funeral pyre. The coffin is laid on a bamboo bier (*ka kromp*), money being placed close to the corpse, so that the spirit of the deceased may possess the wherewithal to buy food on its journey. Cotton, or, in the case of the rich, silk cloths are tied cross-ways over the bier, if the deceased is a male, and in the form of a parallelogram, if it is a female. Before lifting the bier a handful of rice and water from a jar are thrown outside, and a goat (*u'long saiat kmied*) is sacrificed. These are preliminary ceremonies. The funeral procession then forms up and slowly passes along the way to the plaintive music of flutes (*shideit*) and the beating of drums. At intervals, in the case of the rich, salutes from guns are fired. Copper coins are also scattered along the route. On nearing the pyre the dead body is exposed to view, and the pieces of flesh of the sacrificial animals, which are with the corpse, are thrown away. These make ready three betel leaves (*ki kpa*), an egg, the lower jaw-bones of the animals which have been sacrificed, the left leg of the fowl (*u'kor kmied kpoh*), a jar of water, eatables in a dish, and a bow and three arrows. A goat is then sacrificed, *u'long saiat jait*. The corpse is laid on the pyre, inside the coffin, if one is used, with the head to the west and the feet to the east. Logs of

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

If any stream has to be crossed, a rough bridge is made of branches and grass. This trail of leaves and the bridge are intended to guide the spirit of the deceased to the cairn. The person who carries the house is not allowed to turn round, or to the right, or to the left, but must proceed straight to the cairn. On reaching it, a *soophain*, or sacrificer, washes the house three times and then places them in an earthen pot, tying up the mouth with a white cloth. Then, having taken three pieces of the hard yolk of an egg, three leaves of betel, the leg of the fowl, "*u'iar kmad lyoh*," and the lower jaw-bones of the animals which have been sacrificed, he places them inside the cairn and shuts the door. Betelnut and betel-nut are then placed on the top of the cairn. Early next morning the relations and friends go to the cairn with fresh food and water, and look about for new foot-prints, the idea being that from these foot-prints they can foretell future events. This they do until the third night after the cremation. During these three nights the front door of the house formerly occupied by the deceased is never closed, it being thought that the spirit may wish to return and visit its earthly abode. The whole family is moreover *seng*, or taboo, during this period, and no manner of work can be done. When the three nights are over, it is called the *leit ia*, i.e. the days (of mourning) are passed, and three eggs are broken to ascertain what was the cause of the death. After this the family goes to bathe, and the clothes and mats in the house are washed. When this has been done, the taboo is removed and the family can go to work. After a month a pig or a fowl is sacrificed, the ceremony [illegible] seems to be the lucky number throughout these funeral ceremonies. The number seems to bear a similar significance in other matters of Khasi ritual, e.g. the pouring out of libations, which is always done three times.

If it is *seng* or taboo for a Khasi widow to re-marry within one year from the death of her husband, there is a similar prohibition for a husband re-marrying; but such *seng* can be got over by the payment of a fine to the clan of the deceased. After the expiration of one year the fine is reduced in amount. Khasi widows do not as a rule re-marry, according to U Jaobon Roy,

over what their ancestors are doing for them, and what their views and inclinations may be as regards the amount of aid they may give. To a Khasia there is no difficulty about the matter; when in distress or requiring aid of any kind, seeking omens by the breaking of eggs (which I will hereafter describe) he appeals to and propitiates any one ancestor he may select; only one or two may promise such protection, and these it may so happen have died years ago. The benefit also conferred may be very trivial, and sufficiently acknowledged by the setting up of stones of small size; on the contrary, if great favours are conferred on the wealthy we find large monoliths forming conspicuous landmarks on many a hill-top, scattered over a large area of country, and which are mostly known to the country round by the name of the individuals who have wrought so much good in their after state.

These stones are never erected in pairs or in even numbers; in erecting over a very large series still perfect, I found them invariably in sets of three, five, seven, or as I have before mentioned in the case of the Nongtaring clan, in two sets, five and five, on opposite sides, to the same individual.* Even numbers are considered unfinished or imperfect.

A reference to the plans given, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, will show the various arrangements in which the stones are set up, both in a segment of a circle and at right angles to each other, as in fig. 3. The most common form, however, is in line, fig. 4. Fig. 1 consisted of a circular platform raised about two feet, faced with rough stones on the front face. These three examples were observed on the hill of Lailang-kote, where the least is held, and I have not seen anywhere else the monoliths so arranged; in other parts of the country they are invariably set up in a straight row.

These monuments are also erected for such a reason as the following:—During the illness of a person, every kind of propitiation and exorcism either by the breaking of eggs, sacrifice of fowls, pigs, etc., and by the examination of the liver and viscera, having been made, and them failing to restore him; the sufferer may vow that should he recover, he will erect a set of stones to one of his ancestors, who, it is presumed, on knowing of the intention, will do his best to save him.

In setting up these slabs all members of the community are under an obligation to assist on such an occasion, and are not paid for their labour, beyond receiving in the evening a little food or liquor at the dwelling of the family who have sought the aid. The skilled workmen employed on the stone-cutting are,

* These and five are the most frequent numbers met with, also very rare [illegible] have seen eleven.

10:Clarke U-3 (no date)1874 AR7 Khasi AR7

211 middle; annexed is a representation of a common type containing five stones.

A common height for the middle stone of such a monument will be six to ten feet, by 2-3 feet wide. The stones are sunk not very deep, say 1-2 feet, into the earth; great numbers of fallen stones are seen. Monuments of this character are often placed on the crest of the hills, and in many parts of Khasi-land the landscape appears dotted over with them.

The horizontal slabs are commonly grouped in pairs. The flat slabs may be 5-10 feet long, and are rarely so exactly quadrangular, and they generally have some of the corners irregularly rounded off, and thus pass into the oval or round horizontal slab, which is also a frequent type.

The upright and horizontal slabs are often combined to form a single monument, and perhaps the commonest of all the combinations is that in which five upright slabs have two horizontal before them. The combinations adopted are, however, endless in variety. In these combinations it must be understood that the whole group of stones forms one indivisible monument, which may be the monument of one individual, a household, or a family. Families retain a history of the monuments which belong to the family, and thus to a small degree of the names of their ancestors. Such family monuments may be repaired, added to, or rebuilt from time to time. They are not necessarily placed where the family ashes are kept in huts, or near such huts; but they are usually at no great distance from the village where the family dwells.

The putting up a large stone, say one that stands fifteen feet out of the ground, is a very costly matter, and the monuments of the first class in size in the Khasi country are not very numerous; in the monuments of small stones, the number of stones is often great, I have noticed twenty-one stones in a row, no stone exceeding two feet high.

The upright slabs are (particularly when unaccompanied by any horizontal slabs) usually placed in a straight line. But frequently, where the horizontal slab is round, the upright slabs stand in the arc of a circle, and sometimes the upright slabs are placed in a curved line apparently by accident, or because the nature of the steep ground suggested such an arrangement. Two such monuments occur on the main road to Laitlenkote.

Major Godwin-Austen states in his article on the subject that 196 the upright slabs always stand in threes, fives, sevens, etc. This ● 197 is a mistake; to have the number of stones unequal, with the 213 central slab the tallest, is perhaps the plan adopted in forty-nine monuments out of fifty; but among the vast variety of monuments

10: Clarke U-3 (no date)1874 AR7 Khasi AR7

in these hills a dozen monuments on the binary type may soon be found in which there are two equal upright slabs in the middle, and the other stones placed symmetrically on each side of them.

7. There are three kinds of rock employed by the Khasis for stone monuments, viz.:—

a. The Cherra sandstones.
b. The Shillong sandstones.
c. The granite.

Small stones are conveyed considerable distances from the place of manufacture before they are set up—large stones are not—hence the material of the monuments is determined everywhere geologically.

a. The Cherra sandstones are tertiary and cretaceous rocks spread along the southern edge of the plateau and producing the ledges which mark its abrupt termination. In the great thickness of these sandstones are many beds in which the rock occurs in large sheets with very few joints, and well-adapted for working out large slabs therefrom. The sandstone is generally very hard, but not so hard but that the Khasis can work it with their own native-made iron tools.

There is a quarry, now in full work, about half-a-mile out of the old Cherra cantonment, upon the Mamloo path, where slabs may be seen in preparation. The slabs made from the Cherra sandstones, admitting of being worked, are generally hewn pretty fairly to a shape and smoothed before being set up. The ancient monuments are, however, often made of very rough slabs.

All the well-known monuments near the old Cherra station are made of these sandstones, as also the large monuments at Mamloo, Mawsmai, and Lieiuow. These three monuments all stand on sheets of Cherra sandstone and the stones were cut out of the rock hard by where they now stand. The stones quarried now outside the Cherra cantonment, being for transport, are none of great size.

The Khasis also work gigantic slabs of stone for bridges. Where the span is anything under twenty feet a single slab four or five feet wide and two feet thick is thrown across; piers of enormous blocks of sandstone are raised on each side, on which the slab may rest, if there is the remotest fear that the water can, in any flood, reach the under surface of the slab. As compared with such a bridge the Khasis regard the best efforts of the English engineers as mere makeshifts. The arch at Amwee figured by Dr. Hooker is Bengali work.

b. The Shillong sandstones extend over a large area of the northern portion of the plateau: they are often more argillaceous

17: Banerjee E-5 (1955) 1962 AR7 Khasi AR7
Smit

magical in such gifts. The Khasi deities being souls of departed members, are anthropomorphic in nature, have all the qualities of an ordinary human being. The worshippers believe that the deities may also loose their strength in course of time which can be augmented only by offering suitable sacrifices. They presented pieces of meat to transfer in them the supernatural 'power' which are concentrated or lodged in those regions of the sacrificial animal, from where they were taken out. It is a case of reciprocal help between the deity and the devotee so that on attaining their normal strength, they would fulfil their request.

The Khasi people while participating in the celebration gave vent to their emotion through their traditional cries. It could not be definitely established whether these were any indication of frightening the evil spirits but on the other hand, these were intended to cheer the *Siem*, musicians, and the respective units taking parts in the celebration. The musicians on another occassion, went round the altar three times on reaching the top of the hill. The members of the *Siem's* house similarly performed a sacred dance round the fire place of central hall (*Shlur*) to the same number of times. This odd number of three seemed to be an auspicious one. The exact cause for such a reverential attitude to this figure may be to pay respect to their primal ancestress (Ka Iawbei), her husband (U Thawlang) and her brother, *i.e.*, first maternal uncle (U Sudnia) who are considered highest amongst all the Khasi deities.

The dancing is generally taken as secular part of religious function, but the Khasi people considered them (except the last one) as sacred for the reason that it is one of their methods of propitiating their deity. The people at times, ascribe certain meanings to them to rationalize their thinking. The dancing invariably put the participants into ecstasy to enable them to be in communion with their supernatural beings, yet these are interpreted as a device to control the spirits inspite of its calm and quiet nature. The people even then enjoyed them with this hope that these would prevent the intruding spirits from spreading diseases. Owing to the fixation of the dates of the function at the time of sowing period, the dance of the unmarried girls may have some bearing on the promotion of fertility of the soil. The custom of allowing Khasi boys to dance round the spinsters with fly-flap in one of their hands may be to protect them from the influences of the evil spirits.

The heads of the various units adhered to the official precedence strictly before they allowed a common man to take part in the dancing. The custom of allowing two officials of the same, at a time, was in recognition to their equal status. It had become a practice to follow at every stage of their functions. The progress of all the in-charge of this Siemship were essential to secure the blessings of their deity on behalf of his subjects whom they represent in official capacity in the festival. This is a suitable mechanism to foster unity and solidarity among the people of the different units which is the main aim of this celebration. This was found to be so when Khasi people from all parts of State were seen witnessing the dancing of the unmarried girls. The informant on being asked to state the reason of permitting the spinsters only in this dance, came out with an interesting fact about the ancient Khasi tradition. The dance used to offer at one time, an opportunity to the youngmen of the Royal families in selecting their brides. A betel leaf with a nut were usually thrown at a girl and the men going round them, remained as witness of this incident. This explanation received some support from the frequent utterances (*ring-rang*) by the public, expressing a desire to run away with a girl dancing with graceful style.

The celebration can be taken up as a solidarity rite. The performance is all the more essential for the purpose of security without which the people